

BOOK REVIEWS

Ecclesiastes, by Craig G. Bartholomew. Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009. 448 pp. \$39.99.

Throughout its history of interpretation, *Ecclesiastes* has been one of the most difficult books to interpret. One issue that has made *Ecclesiastes* a challenge is determining its message. Does the book have a negative or positive overall message? Is *Ecclesiastes* about the vanity of life, or about celebrating it? While a number of leading commentators have taken the message of *Ecclesiastes* negatively as a foil to the other books in the canon, Craig G. Bartholomew's commentary provides a modest contrast to a pessimistic interpretation of this book.

Bartholomew is the H. Evan Runner Professor of Philosophy and professor of religion and theology at Redeemer University College in Ontario, Canada. His qualifications for writing this commentary are unmistakably displayed in his 1999 work, *Reading Ecclesiastes: Old Testament Exegesis and Hermeneutical Theory*, a revised edition of his 1996 dissertation completed at the University of Bristol. The most helpful contribution of *Reading Ecclesiastes* is Bartholomew's discussion of the history of interpreting *Ecclesiastes*. Between *Reading Ecclesiastes*, other books, and articles, he is particularly competent to write a commentary on *Ecclesiastes*.

Bartholomew provides a helpful and detailed discussion of germane introductory issues (pp. 17–99), such as the history of interpretation (pp. 21–43) and genre and literary style (pp. 61–82). The remainder of the volume is divided into the actual commentary (pp. 101–373), followed by a postscript (pp. 375–89), bibliography (pp. 391–420), and indexes referencing subjects, authors, Scripture, and other ancient writings (pp. 421–48). The commentary itself is divided into three sections: the frame narrative: prologue, 1:1–11 (pp. 101–17), Qohelet's exploration of the meaning of life, 1:12–12:7 (pp. 119–357), and the frame narrative: epilogue, 12:8–14 (pp. 359–73). The body of the commentary (pp. 119–357) focuses on Qohelet's exploration of the meaning of life. This is divided into twenty-one units. With each of these sections, as well as the prologue and epilogue, Bartholomew provides his own translation, followed by his interpretation of the text and its theological implications.

Bartholomew cautiously proposes that Qohelet lived in a third-century Israelite community that had been exposed to a pervasive Greek philosophy with its stress on an autonomous epistemology. The programmatic question in 1:3 (“What does man profit from all his work at which he toils under the sun?”) initiates his exploration into finding the meaning of life by using an empiricist epistemology throughout the

majority of Ecclesiastes. In this book Qohelet walks, as it were, in the sandals of his audience who believed that the LORD's promises had failed and that there was no empirical evidence supporting his purposes and promises (p. 94). Qohelet's trip "is carried forward by the *hebel* conclusions and their contradictory juxtapositions with *carpe diem* passages, the developing tension between the juxtapositions, as well as the growing sense of irony of the autonomous epistemology driving his journey" (p. 83). His journey ends when these "*deliberately* juxtaposed" (p. 81) gaps are resolved in 11:8–10 and 12:1–7. Through almost eleven chapters of Ecclesiastes, Qohelet places the *hebel* ("breath," "vanity," etc.) motif in juxtaposition with the *carpe diem* ("enjoyment-of-life") motif immediately following. However, this order is reversed in 11:8–10 and 12:1–7 where the *carpe diem* passage comes first (p. 354). In contrast to those who respond to life with an autonomous epistemology, Qohelet's reversal of the two motifs purportedly provides the solution to life in an enigmatic world. With this reversal the emphasis of the *carpe diem* passage on rejoicing and remembering one's Creator provides the solution to the *hebel* passages and their concentration on the lack of meaning in life (pp. 354–58).

I will make three observations about this commentary. First, because of Bartholomew's impeccable credentials and research, he has made a noteworthy exegetical contribution into the expanding field of Qohelet studies. In the midst of concisely covering the key areas one expects in a commentary, he also develops an argument that is something of a hybrid between a positive and negative interpretation of Ecclesiastes. What keeps Bartholomew from a pessimistic interpretation is 11:8–10 and 12:1–7. In these two passages Qohelet's theology of creation explicitly surfaces (12:1, "Remember your Creator") to solve the meaninglessness of life. In the final analysis of Ecclesiastes, Bartholomew concludes with an interpretation of Ecclesiastes that is not pessimistic (pp. 355–58).

Second, his translation of the key term, *hebel*, as "enigmatic," is a welcome contribution to Ecclesiastes, although he occasionally allows this word to have other nuances (p. 106). Following the lead of Ogden ("Vanity' It Certainly Is Not," *The Bible Translator* 38 [July 1987]: 301–7), I made a similar argument in 1996 that the core nuance for the majority of uses of *hebel* in Ecclesiastes was essentially the same ("The Message of Ecclesiastes," *DBSJ* 1 [Spring 1996]: 88–94). Qohelet begins his book with "all is *hebel*" (1:2) and concludes it with the same (12:8). When Qohelet presents the specifics of the "all" and he appraises these as "*hebel*," these uses should have the same nuance as *hebel* does in 1:2 and 12:8.

Third, though there are some areas where I have concerns, such as his, at times, sparse commentary on the text, reading too much into the "*deliberately* juxtaposed" gaps (p. 81), and how his use of irony twists the obvious meaning of key texts (for example, note how Bartholomew distorts the use of *wisdom* in Eccl 2:3 [p. 131]), my primary concern is with Bartholomew's conclusions regarding Qohelet's autonomous epistemology. Rather than having Qohelet's epistemology based on Greek

philosophy with a return to Israelite wisdom only in the end, I understand that Qohelet's epistemology throughout the book is based on the wisdom tradition of Israel. This explains why Ecclesiastes is permeated with connections to the early chapters of Genesis. As such, Qohelet, as a godly sage, recognized that he lived in a world that had been supernaturally cursed by the Fall, but that God was still working to preserve his creation. By using polarized motifs, Qohelet designed his masterpiece to explore how to live wisely as God's people in a fallen world.

I found Bartholomew's *Ecclesiastes* to be a beneficial resource when I taught Hebrew Exegesis of Ecclesiastes and I can positively recommend it with only a few reservations.

Robert V. McCabe

The Shepherd Leader, by Timothy Z. Witmer. Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2010. xi + 268 pp. \$17.99.

The Shepherd Leader is a welcome addition to the field of pastoral theology. Witmer is Professor of Pastoral Theology at Westminster Theological Seminary (PA). He also serves as the Preaching Minister at Crossroads Community Church (PCA) in Upper Darby, PA. He brings a teacher's organization and a pastor's heart to the subject of the pastor being a shepherd-leader in the local church.

This work is divided into three main parts, each comprised of several chapters. The first part lays the biblical and historical foundation for the role of the shepherd, surveying the Old Testament and New Testament pictures of the shepherd with a brief historical survey and discussion of a shepherd's authority. The second part outlines the duties of the shepherd: to know, feed, lead, and protect the sheep. And the final part proposes a ministry model and ideas for implementing an effective shepherding ministry.

The book has several weaknesses. The author tends to overemphasize "shepherding" to the exclusion of other images of pastoral ministry in the New Testament such as elder, overseer, and pastor-teacher. He brings in OT pictures of the Shepherds of Israel and applies them directly to the obligation to shepherd the NT church. Though there is a hermeneutical issue here, I still find the discussion very helpful overall, as his discussion and description of the "shepherd" theme is tied in to the coming Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ, and pastors today as under-shepherds of Christ serving the church (1 Pet 5:1-4; Eph 4:11; Acts 20:21).

Another critique is Witmer's assumptive arguments about the plurality and parity of eldership. For instance, he quotes John Murray saying "Paul called to Miletus the elders of the church and charged them, as a plurality, to shepherd the flock of God" (p. 40). While not necessarily opposed to either plurality or parity, the Scriptures are general enough

to allow for more variety in leadership structure (hierarchy and singularity, for instance) than Witmer allows for. The argument he makes for elders that are not gifted to teach is particularly weak when he makes the contradictory statement “not all elders have the gift of teaching, though they should be apt to teach” (p. 43). He also puts an unnecessary wedge between the role of a teaching elder and a shepherding elder, asking, “How is the teaching elder supposed to have the time to give careful attention to the preaching and teaching ministry of the Word if he is charged with shepherding the *entire* flock as well?” (p. 43). A discussion of the role of deacons in aiding the elders would have been helpful here, though it is briefly included later in the book (pp. 208–12).

Even with the criticisms mentioned, I would highly recommend the model that Witmer lays out in the remainder of the book. He presents the obligation of a NT church pastor given in Acts 20:21 to “shepherd the church of God” and provides a clear outline and description of how to go about doing this on both a philosophical level (including both public and personal ministry) and on a practical level. His teaching ability is clearly seen, as he lays out his chapters with an accompanying chart that is filled in as each area is described. Many pastoral theology books focus on “feeding” and “leading” the flock. Witmer’s book meets a need in the field as it brings in the additional aspects of “knowing” and “protecting” the flock to fill out more exhaustively the elder’s biblical responsibility.

The third part, “Putting it All Together,” will aid pastors as Witmer moves from discussing responsibilities to giving practical ways to fulfill those responsibilities in a local church. Particularly helpful are the emphases on making our shepherding systematic and comprehensive in scope, for we are accountable for all of the sheep on our roles, and all aspects of those sheep’s lives. His rule of thumb—that the ideal for each elder is to shepherd ten to fifteen family units (p. 208)—seems somewhat arbitrary given the history of pastoral ministry. If the elders are given freedom to focus on the ministry of the Word and prayer, then this number should be able to increase significantly. His model will definitely help shepherds who feel the bulk of their personal ministry is in the context of “crisis” events. A more comprehensive ministry is at the same time good for all the flock and encouraging to the shepherd.

I would highly recommend this book, particularly if you find yourself either uncertain about how to fulfill your call as a shepherd in all its aspects or if you find yourself knowing your responsibility but frustrated in your ability to carry it out effectively in your local church.

Pearson Johnson

Rediscovering the Church Fathers: Who They Were and How They Shaped the Church, by Michael A. G. Haykin. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011. 172 pp. \$16.99.

It can hardly be doubted that most present-day evangelicals have at best a cursory knowledge of the church fathers. For many, what is known about the Fathers has led them to view the Fathers with considerable suspicion and even hostility. The lives of the Fathers are rarely studied. Their writings are rarely read. Their exegesis and theological method is often criticized. In *Rediscovering the Church Fathers*, Michael Haykin hopes to offset these tendencies by providing an introductory guide to patristic study. For Haykin, rediscovering the church fathers is “a vital need for Evangelicals.” Their rediscovery is vital for several reasons. First, studying the church fathers “liberates us from the present” (p. 17). Examining the past helps us recognize our own presuppositions and prejudices that may color our theological method. Second, the Fathers “can provide us with a map for the Christian life” (p. 18). Examining the spiritual journeys of past Christians can serve as a guide for our own spiritual quest. Third, the church fathers “may also, in some cases, help us to understand the New Testament” (p. 19). A reading of the Fathers may help modern interpreters avoid anachronistic interpretations and other exegetical errors since many of the Fathers wrote in a cultural context more akin to the NT authors themselves. Fourth, historical investigation of the Fathers is important in light of the “bad press” the Fathers have received from critics of Christianity like those presented in *The Da Vinci Code* by Dan Brown (p. 20). Brown portrays the Fathers as men who intentionally distorted the true facts about Jesus and Christianity in order to deceive and control their contemporaries. Knowledge of the Fathers would make attacks on Christianity such as these appear ludicrous. Fifth, the Fathers can act as a guide in defending the faith (p. 22). The early church had to deal with attacks on the faith from Gnostics, Arians, Pelagians, and others. Errors like these exist today in one form or another, and the Fathers can help us know how to address them. Finally, reading the church fathers can be spiritually nurturing (p. 27). In most cases, the Fathers were pastors and theologians, men committed to understanding and applying the Scriptures to their lives and congregations. Their insights in these areas may prove valuable to the cultivation of spiritual virtues in own lives today.

Having made the case for studying the Fathers, Haykin devotes six chapters to case studies in the Fathers and one chapter to his own journey into patristic study. In the case studies, Haykin treats issues such as martyrdom, eucharistic piety, exegesis, and missions through the lives of select church fathers. The case studies include examinations of Ignatius of Antioch, the *Letter to Diognetus*, Origen, Cyprian, Ambrose, Basil of Caesarea, and Patrick. The selection of those treated is both a strength and a weakness in this book. It is a strength in that most people are probably not familiar with a work such as the *Letter to Diognetus*. Furthermore, many people know who St. Patrick is but know little about

his actual life and ministry. Exposure to these patristic sources is helpful for the furtherance of patristic knowledge. However, the selection is a weakness in that there are a few conspicuous omissions. Though at times mentioned in passing, it is hard to imagine a patristic introduction that does not include discussions of Tertullian, Athanasius, Augustine of Hippo, Clement of Alexandria, or John Chrysostom. The reader who wishes to find out who these men were and how they shaped the church will have to look elsewhere. One wonders if Haykin's chapter on how he was introduced to the church fathers could have been moved to an appendix, making room for at least one more examination on one of the above mentioned Fathers.

It is beyond the scope of this review to provide detailed assessment of Haykin's case studies. In brief, the case studies are intriguing and thought-provoking. Haykin's favorable assessment of Origen's exegesis, for instance, is bound to promote further study of the infamous "heretic" (Haykin would not classify Origen as such). The chapter on Ignatius makes an important correction to many stereotypes of martyrdom in the early church. Haykin's chapters on *The Letter to Diognetus* and on the eucharistic piety of Cyprian and Ambrose show some of the theological weaknesses that can be found in the Fathers. These discussions are the great strength of the book in that they model how to ask questions of the Fathers on specific issues. As such, this book is more of an introduction to the study of patristics than an introduction to the church fathers. Nevertheless, *Rediscovering the Church Fathers* is a valuable guide for those interested in studying the church fathers for themselves.

Timothy Scott

The Meaning of the Pentateuch: Revelation, Composition and Interpretation, by John H. Sailhamer. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press. 2009. 632 pp. \$40.00.

In *The Meaning of the Pentateuch (MP)*, OT scholar John H. Sailhamer has written a substantial work on the Pentateuch attempting to outline his understanding of the meaning and purpose of the first five books of the Bible. Weighing in at 632 pages, this book is clearly the result of years of study in the OT and particularly in the Pentateuch.

The major argument of *MP* is that the Pentateuch has a compositional approach or a compositional strategy by which the material in the Pentateuch has been chosen and arranged to make an overarching point. For Sailhamer, "the meaning is not merely *in* the biblical book; the meaning *is* the book" as seen in its compositional structure (p. 73). This ultimate meaning, according to Sailhamer, is about living a life of faith in God based on a Messianic hope (pp. 28–29, 39, 605, 608).

MP consists of eleven chapters in three parts. Following a lengthy introduction, part one (pp. 59–218) is titled "Approaching the Text as

Revelation,” and discusses many bibliographical and hermeneutical issues along with a healthy dose of interpretive history. Part two (pp. 219–415) is titled “Rediscovering the Composition of the Pentateuch Within the Tanak.” This section is the heart of this book, arguing for an intentional compositional structure consisting of five blocks of narrative, five poems, and five collections of laws (pp. 276–79). In this section, and indeed the rest of the book, Sailhamer discusses how these blocks are woven together to make an argument concerning the life of faith that God’s people should live. Part three (pp. 419–612) is titled “Interpreting the Theology of the Pentateuch” and contains discussions of theological themes such as the “biblical Jesus” and the messianic hope, the Mosaic Law (including its relationship to the believer), and salvation in the OT.

This book has much to commend it. In general, its overall argument is one that makes a lot of sense of the Pentateuch. It guides one away from reading the Bible as a collection of stories and towards reading the Bible as composition designed to lead one towards a more comprehensive view of and faith in God’s work. Indeed, the principles and methodology espoused in *MP* are useful throughout the entire Bible. In addition, one will be challenged to consider the overall plan of God as seen in the entire biblical corpus. In short, this book helps one see the forest, rather than only the trees.

Sailhamer is a strong proponent of authorial intent. As such, he is constantly posing the question of what the author intends his readers to understand. This intent determines meaning, even more so than the beliefs and actions of the characters themselves as recorded by the author, things that “lie largely outside the boundaries of the biblical text” (p. 569). He says that “Christians are obliged to read the OT as the OT writers understood it, and only then ask how it relates to the NT and the church” (p. 603). In discussions of the unity of Scripture and the Christological reading of the OT, this emphasis on authorial intent is a much-needed reminder.

Sailhamer devotes his attention to the final form of the text that he dates after the writing of Malachi (p. 23). Though Sailhamer affirms fundamental Mosaic authorship, he sees a role for some sort of editorial work in light of passages like the death of Moses (Deut 34) and statements such as Deuteronomy 34:10, which speaks of the superiority of Moses to other prophets, something that makes sense only if there has been a succession of prophets to which Moses can be compared. The significance of these types of passages cannot be overlooked, though other suggestions, such as Genesis 15:3–4 (pp. 442ff.), are less convincing. One weakness in Sailhamer’s presentation of the “final form argument” is that he gives no guidelines for determining what is part of the Mosaic composition and what are later editorial comments.

Sailhamer also has a strong view of innertextuality. He sees the Pentateuch as the foundation of the entire OT and as that which is explicated by the rest of the OT. Throughout his book, and particularly in the latter half, Sailhamer shows how the rest of the OT finds roots in the Pentateuch, such as he does with an extended discussion of Jeremiah

4:1–2 (pp. 481–99). Other passages, such as Psalm 72 and Hosea 11:1 receive similar, but abbreviated treatments. Sailhamer makes a well-reasoned argument that the prophets are ultimately interpreters and expositors of the Pentateuch (pp. 238–56, esp. 238–39). Through these arguments about innertextuality, the reader gains some insight not just into Sailhamer's theology, but also into his methodology, something extremely valuable.

This book has some weaknesses that detract from the overall benefit. It contains what can only be described as some tenuous arguments. For instance, Sailhamer likens Abraham and Melchizedek to Jethro and Moses (pp. 369–74). In a rather obtuse section, he seems to attempt to outline a (mostly unconvincing) argument that Paul's reference in Galatians 3:16 to the singular seed of Abraham who is Christ is actually based in Genesis 15:1–4 (pp. 439–54). In his discussion of the Sinai covenant and Exodus 19–24, he suggests multiple versions of the covenant that indicate the original intent in the covenant was a relationship based on faith without laws, similar to the Abrahamic covenant (p. 379). He goes so far as to argue that the Decalogue was not a part of the original Sinai covenant. He asserts that the people's fear in Exodus 19 was a major issue that led to the need for a mediator and a priesthood in the priestly code (pp. 372–98, esp. 398). In some of these exegetical discussions, Sailhamer labors long, too long in my estimation, to make his point, and in the end fails to convince.

Structurally, *MP* seems somewhat disconnected. The chapters are quite long—some in excess of fifty pages—and some of them seem to lack clear organization and flow of thought. In some ways, the book reads like a series of loosely connected articles or lectures rather than a single, unified work. This makes it hard to maintain focus.

At times, the book seems repetitive both from paragraph to paragraph as well as chapter to chapter. Frequently, Sailhamer returns to themes and arguments he has previously made. Only infrequently does he refer to his previous comments, even if only by way of remarking that he has previously addressed a given topic. In one instance, Sailhamer has virtually identical paragraphs about Berkhof's view of Coccejus, including the same quote from Berkhof (pp. 41, 353). In this regard, the book seems almost unaware of itself. A thorough editing surely could have resolved some of these issues and perhaps suggested a clearer and more concise outline for the book.

One of the benefits of Sailhamer's book, the depth and breadth of its scholarship, leads to another of its weaknesses, namely, that it does not always clearly distinguish between views that are being summarized for informational purposes, views that are being critiqued, and views that are being espoused. This leads to confusion at times, particularly in his somewhat lengthy interactions with other scholars. The reader will probably find himself or herself scanning previously read material for clarification.

Another less significant point but distracting nonetheless is that non-biblical, foreign languages (e.g., Latin and German) are left

untranslated both in the footnotes and, less often, in the text itself. Most readers would be better served by having these notes translated.

Overall, this book is a good contribution to the field of OT studies, particularly Pentateuch studies. While this is probably not a book for the uninitiated, it will provide much fodder for thinking about some significant issues in OT research. Whether one ultimately agrees with Sailhamer or not, any thoughtful reading of *MP* will be stimulating.

G. Larry Rogier

Preaching that Pleases God: The Keys to Life-Changing Bible Exposition, by Tom Farrell. Lancaster, CA: Striving Together Publications, 2010. xiv + 231 pp. \$19.95.

Tom Farrell served at the Wilds Christian Camp of Brevard, NC, from 1974 to 1990, and he has been an itinerant evangelist since 1979. In 1990 he formed Tom Farrell Evangelistic Ministries and continued preaching in local churches and camps both in the US and internationally. *Preaching that Pleases God (PPG)* is the published version of his Doctor of Ministry project for Northland International University. In the introduction, Farrell expresses his desire to help preachers “do a faithful work for God and preach with his anointing the most powerful book ever written” (p. xiv).

In between introductory and concluding comments, *PPG* is divided into four sections. The first section, “The Commission for Preaching,” contains two chapters, one on the reasons to preach and another on the character of the preacher. Section two has three chapters dealing with “The Comprehension of Preaching.” Chapters in this section deal with foundational matters of sermon preparation, including understanding the text, understanding the theme, and developing application. The third section titled “The Construction of Preaching” gives instruction for developing the sermon from material collected. Farrell identifies and discusses seven parts of a sermon: text, theme, title, introduction, body, conclusion, and invitation. The fourth section is titled “The Communication in Preaching” and instructs the preacher to seek the power of God in preaching via the anointing of the Holy Spirit. This section also encourages preachers to discern gifts and personality and to be “you” in the pulpit. It further urges preachers to handle God’s Word accurately, with authority, and with an eye toward application.

PPG offers some very helpful observations throughout. First, Farrell contends “that of the valid types of preaching, the most valuable is expository preaching—hence, it is the main subject of this book” (p. 44). He desires “that God will use this book to improve expository preaching and increase its use” (p. 45). Second, Farrell rightly exhorts preachers to allow the Bible to minister to them before they minister to others. With 1 Timothy 4:16 as the biblical basis, he encourages preachers “to be

what you ought to be before you can preach as you ought to preach” (pp. 27–28). He aptly warns preachers from Matthew 23:11 that “there is no place in God’s vineyard for celebrities, only servants” (p. 31). And he rightly reminds preachers that they are servants.

These beneficial observations notwithstanding, *PPG* is also open to some criticism. First, *PPG* is unclear as to how expository sermon outlines are developed from the theme of the text. Farrell identifies the theme as the dominant truth in a text and states that it should therefore be the center of the sermon. He cites Haddon Robinson and Wayne McDill to elucidate this point (pp. 101–2). He also explains that the theme is sometimes obvious, but sometimes is difficult to determine and cites Jerry Vines who offers some guidelines to assist in this matter (p. 103). While this is helpful, there appears to be a disjunction between the theme and the development of the sermon body. The focus of chapter 7 on developing the body of the sermon is given to “constructive and creative ways to make them [outlines] memorable” (p. 118). Farrell states, “Keep in mind that each major point should reflect the theme of the passage” (p. 118). Farrell does not clearly state that in expository preaching the outline develops from the theme. Nor does he make clear the related point that the main divisions of the outline should reflect the structure—whether implicit or explicit—of the text. Expository sermons derive their theme and support from the subject and structure of the text itself. Farrell’s statement that the outline should “reflect” the theme lacks precision. In the end, this imprecision could lead away from the sort of expository sermon he is seeking to promote and, instead, toward purely topical ones.

Second, *PPG* seems to devote a disproportionate amount of space to the various aspects of sermonic development, namely, explanation, argumentation, illustration, and invitation. Explanation and argumentation together comprise just fewer than five pages of material. However, over ten pages are given to illustrating well. And Farrell makes the invitation a major part of the sermon, devoting some twenty pages of material to it (pp. 146–65). He expresses concern with those who do not use the public invitation. Farrell describes how the public invitation contributes to the sermon by allowing for a time of confession, commitment, or counseling. He insists on the invitation being clear and concise. He offers a word of caution to not be sensational. Farrell emphasizes that the invitation should make the “appeal to obey God now and be changed by the Holy Spirit” (p. 156). However, he does not offer any compelling arguments for the necessity of the immediacy of the public invitation.

Third, although Farrell defines both hermeneutics and exegesis (pp. 43–44), the answer he provides concerning “why” we preach fails to reflect sound application of these disciplines. In the opening paragraph of the book, he cites Paul’s assertion in 1 Corinthians 1:21 that “it pleased God by the foolishness of *preaching* to save them that believe” (p. 3, emphasis his). Later on Farrell claims the “why” we preach is because that is what pleases God, which also seems to explain the title of

the book (p. 25). This answer seems to owe more to the translation Farrell uses (KJV) than to the actual meaning of the passage. As nearly all other translations reflect, 1 Corinthians 1 does not address the medium (preaching) but rather the gospel message itself. It is the foolishness of the cross that God is pleased to use. Farrell's case for preaching is, therefore, based on a mistaken interpretation.

There are other disappointing aspects of the book. Much of the material cited or recommended is dated. Although the book was published in 2010, very little recent homiletical material is cited. Also, while the reader will appreciate the call for confidence in preaching the Word of God, the book has a sense of being too formulaic: follow these steps and preaching will be effective. Farrell clearly expresses dependence on the Spirit of God; however, the elements of the book seem to put a great emphasis on mastering sermonic factors that contribute to higher decision-making at the moment of preaching. The long-term benefit of the methods presented in *PPG* for a sustained preaching ministry in a local church context is suspect.

PPG has some helpful aids (e.g., outline development helps) and therefore may serve well for general homiletic reading for a pastor. Because of the apparent lack of clarity on expository sermonic development, it may not serve well as a text in a homiletics course on the college or seminary level. There is homiletic value to *PPG*, but it should be taken as supplementary to other books that present a clear argument for and accurate development of expository sermons.

Dan Winnberg

40 Questions About Christians and Biblical Law, by Thomas R. Schreiner. Grand Rapids, Kregel, 2010. 256 pp. \$17.99.

The relationship between the Christian and biblical law is a perennial gospel and pastoral issue. As the introduction to this volume notes, it impacts how one puts the whole Bible together, how one understands justification, and how one understands the will of God for the believer. In this book, Tom Schreiner seeks to guide the reader toward an accurate understanding of the law in the Scriptures.

Schreiner likely needs little introduction to readers of this journal. He has published several scholarly works that treat the topic of the book under review, but with this contribution to Kregel's "40 Questions" series Schreiner makes his work accessible to a broader range of Christians.

This is not to say that the cookies are on the bottom shelf in this book. It is a substantial work in its own right. Schreiner states in the preface that the intended audience is pastors, students, and laypeople who have an interest in biblical theology, and he communicates sufficiently well to that audience. Even though he is writing to include laypeople, Schreiner is clearly in conversation with other scholars, as the

footnotes and annotated bibliography reveal. At times the language he uses, such as “Jesus tradition,” slips into scholarly jargon. Nevertheless, the book does work toward being lay-friendly, particularly by its organization into short (4–8 page) answers to specific questions. In the body of the work, all Hebrew and Greek words are transliterated and translated, while in the footnotes they are sometimes left in the original.

The greatest strength of the book is its question and answer format, exactly what one would expect, given its title. This format allows the reader to zero in quickly on specific issues related to the law. In this respect the book makes an excellent reference work. This strength is reinforced by a Scripture index, an ancient sources index, and an annotated bibliography. The forty questions selected do an impressive job of covering the complex field of issues relating to the law. These questions are organized into five parts.

Part 1: The Law in the Old Testament

Part 2: The Law in Paul (further broken down into “Questions Related to the New Perspective,” “Questions Related to the Role of the Law in the Christian Life,” and “Questions Related to Justification”)

Part 3: The Law in the Gospels and Acts

Part 4: The Law in the General Epistles

Part 5: The Law and Contemporary Issues

Another strength of this book is the clear and concise delineation of what are often complicated arguments. Schreiner does a highly commendable job of describing and evaluating various exegetical and theological positions.

A book on this topic will be controversial, of course. While defending the Reformational perspective on justification against the New Perspective challenges, Schreiner denies the standard Reformed three-fold division of the law and argues that believers are no longer obligated to the OT law because Christians do not live under the covenant given to Israel. This position raises questions as to how today’s Christian should apply the OT law, and if there is one weakness in the book which I would point out, it would be here. It is not that Schreiner does not address these questions; he does, and the answers he gives are generally true. He basically argues that we must “follow the lead of the New Testament” (p. 229). He addresses two particular questions relating to the Sabbath and to tithing. This is helpful, yet I would suggest that more work is needed to bring clarity. For example, what are we to learn from OT laws that touch on issues about which the NT is silent? Clearly they are relevant to our obedience to God, but how? I recognize that a book can only include so much in its size and scope, yet if the “So what?” question had been pressed more insistently in this book, it would have added to its value.

This is a book that will be particularly useful for pastors who need to be aware of the theological lay of the land, such as the New Perspective on Paul, without spending years assessing all the latest trends in the academy. It will also be of great value to theological students who are

first venturing into the thicket of studies on the law.

It will probably not be as useful to scholars who are already well familiar with other Schreiner's writings. Those who have read his journal articles, *The Law and Its Fulfillment, Romans* (BECNT), "The Commands of God" (in *Central Themes in Biblical Theology*, ed. Hafemann and House), *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ*, or *Galatians* (ZECNT), will already have a good handle on Schreiner's theology. Some chapters of the present work are drawn from previously published material (e.g., Schreiner notes that his answers to questions 22, 25, and 36 come substantially from his *New Testament Theology*). Even here, however, the present volume can be useful for seeing where further study has changed his position and for a clear statement of his mature views.

The forward calls this book an "instant classic." While this is hyperbolic, I concur that Schreiner's work is top notch. The topic is always timely, and the book is strong. It is highly recommended.

Jason Parker

Invitation to World Missions: A Trinitarian Missiology for the Twenty-First Century, by Timothy C. Tennent. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2010. 559 pp. \$38.99.

Invitation to World Missions (IWM) is a new entry into the field of missions theology, or missiology, as some prefer. Kregel adds this work to the rapidly growing field of evangelical missiological studies, and it has included this book in its *Invitation to Theological Studies* series that is published "to provide a primary textbook for core graduate-level courses" (p. 2).

The author, Timothy Tennent, serves as the President and Professor of World Christianity at Asbury Theological Seminary. Tennent previously served for more than a decade as Professor of World Missions and Indian Studies at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. He teaches yearly in India, and has also taught in a number of other cross-cultural contexts.

IWM is presented in four parts, following Tennent's "Trinitarian" formula. Part one is the introduction, which discusses trends shaping missions and the background to Tennent's missiological framework. Part two covers God the Father as the source and goal of the *Missio Dei*. Part three addresses the work of God the Son in the *Missio Dei*, and part four focuses on God the Holy Spirit as the "Presence of the *Mission Dei*." Tennent begins his preface by setting his work in context of the teaching and missions literature of the last two centuries: "Central to my concern in writing this book is that the way missions mostly has been conceptualized over the last generation is no longer adequate for the peculiar challenges and exciting opportunities that await us in the

unfolding of twenty-first century missions” (p. 9). This introduction, as well as the focus on the *Missio Dei*, immediately gives cause for concern.

One of the most helpful and clear parts of this work is Tennent’s discussion of the “Seven Megatrends That Are Shaping Twenty-First Century Missions” (ch. 1). Tennent describes well the changing face of missions in light of the shifting of the majority of adherents to Christianity from the West to the global South and the changing worldview of most of the West. While the use of *Missio Dei* gives cause for concern initially, Tennent does provide a helpful discussion of the popularization and use of the term since the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910 and the subsequent separation of the term from God’s work through the church in accomplishing his mission. It is Tennent’s concern that the church remain the primary actor in accomplishing God’s mission. Another strength of Tennent is in describing the historical flow of thought in missions as a discipline. Chapters 8–10 give a good description of missions history up to the modern era. While the reader may not agree with the finer theological points of his Trinitarian emphasis, his discussion in chapters two and three is helpful in having one consider the role of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the work of missions.

There are many serious and foundational causes for concern, however, if this book is being considered for a textbook. Tennent is no dispensational premillennialist, and most regular readers of this journal will find his discussion of the role of the church in the world today to be inclusive of much more than is outlined in the New Testament. The redemption of both mankind and culture as part of the mission is seen in his definition of missions: “*All the specific and varied ways in which the church crosses cultural boundaries to reflect the life of the triune God in the world and, through that identity, participates in His mission, celebrating through word and deed the inbreaking of the New Creation*” (p. 59, italics his). He promotes and embraces the ministry philosophy of Ockenga and the “new evangelical” that is both “doctrinally orthodox *and* socially engaged” (pp. 90–91). Tennent is ecumenical in his approach, saying “We also need to invest more time in constructive engagement with our Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox brothers and sisters” (p. 50). He also endorses the correctives of Pentecostalism, while providing some criticism, for awakening the modern church to the role of the Spirit. He writes, “Even a casual reading of the book of Acts reveals that signs and wonders and persecution often accompany and attest to the faithful preaching of the gospel” (p. 100) and “During the twentieth century, the Pentecostal movement served to reawaken the church to the normative aspect of the Holy Spirit’s activity in the church and in our witness to the world” (p. 431). These concerns are foundational in nature as they deal with issues regarding the purpose of the church, the goal of missions, the role of special revelation, and the interaction of the church with culture.

Like many modern missiologists, Tennent tends to make the task of missions much more complicated than this writer thinks it needs to be.

Graduate students will find Tennent's work to provide helpful supplementary reading, particularly in understanding paradigms and trends in missions both historical and modern. It is academic and interacts with popular and internationally known missiologists. However, given his hermeneutical, theological, and ideological perspective, *IWM* should be avoided as a textbook.

Pearson Johnson

The Gospel-Driven Life: Being Good News People in a Bad News World, by Michael Horton. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009. 271 pp. \$19.99.

Michael Horton is J. Gresham Machen Professor of Systematic Theology and Apologetics at Westminster Seminary California and serves at Christ United Reformed Church in Santee, CA. This work is a sequel to *Christless Christianity* (2008). In the earlier book he described a crisis in American Evangelicalism, and in the book under review he outlines the solution. In some ways *The Gospel-Driven Life* defies classification. It is thoughtful but not an academic cogitation. It is winsome but not devotional. Perhaps it may best be compared to a series of doctrinally rich topical sermons on soteriology and ecclesiology. In fact, this emphasis on ecclesiology is what makes the book a worthwhile contribution to the healthy stream of crucicentric literature flowing from Reformed evangelicalism.

While Horton weaves together both gospel and church themes throughout the book, the first half of the book centers on the gospel. The gospel, he demonstrates, starts with God. It is his story (ch. 1). Presentations of the gospel always go askew when they begin with relatively trivial interpersonal problems rather than God's profound problem with humans. If God is at the center, the crisis is not human boredom, low self-esteem, or even hurricanes. The "real crisis" is that God is justly angry with all humanity for sin (ch. 2). Keeping God at the center also allows the only viable solution: the death of his Son in place of sinners and resurrection for their justification (ch. 3).

A number of misunderstandings result from putting humanity in the center of the gospel story (ch. 4). For instance, regarding the common expression "making Jesus your personal Lord and Savior," Horton replies, "Faith receives; it does not make" (p. 93). "'Lord and Savior' is simply who God is, not something that we make him to be for us" (ibid.). The necessary human response to salvation must not usurp primacy over divine activity and initiative (ch. 5).

Divine activity and initiative in the Good News also take primary importance in the growth of the converted toward true holiness (ch. 6). Believers are not called to conjure Christlikeness in their daily behavior by sheer willpower or through "holy clubs" (p. 146). Biblical purposes do not in themselves "drive" people any more than sea charts and GPS

coordinates drive a ship; “only the gospel promise can fill our sails and restore us to the joy of our salvation” (p. 144). Necessary Christlikeness comes through faith which itself is brought about by the creative and powerful promise of God (p. 142).

In the second part of the book, Horton relates his understanding of the gospel to the Christian community, the church. The church’s proper mission is the announcement of the lordship of Christ through word and sacrament (ch. 7). The announcement of the Good News forms a new community with a new culture that holds this Good News as common ground, not social status or ethnic roots (ch. 8). This community finds its home at the administration of God’s table, where Christ continues to be proclaimed as “a feast in a fast-food culture” (ch. 9). In the final chapter, Horton explains that members of this community “belong to two cultures.... For now, the work of the church—as the church—is distinct from the work of individual believers in their common citizenship with unbelievers” (p. 258). This situation will continue until Christ, who “is presently reigning in grace,” will return to reign “in glory” (p. 257).

Throughout the book Horton refreshingly relies on the objective authority of the Scriptures and the centrality of penal substitutionary atonement. Though I would disagree with his eschatological perspective, Horton’s two-kingdoms approach to the Christ and culture question appears workable. Still, a full treatment of his ideas on that issue should be sought elsewhere.

Naturally, longstanding disagreements between the various branches of the Reformation continue. Horton is to be commended for refusing to shy away from these old controversies for the sake of popularity. But more compelling defenses for his position on infant baptism, for instance, might be made. What he writes is true: Many believers trace their faith to growing up in the context of a nurturing body of believers. There is no need to demand “something extraordinary, novel, and exciting” or to “look away from what God is doing through ordinary preaching” and regular church ministry (p. 232). Nevertheless, it does not follow that unbelieving little ones must belong to that body of believers in order to come to faith. Rather, allowing those who do not yet call on the name of the Lord to belong to the visible church may downplay the need for new birth and conversion “through ordinary preaching.”

Overall, however, the book accomplishes its purpose of calling the American church back to biblical, Christ-centered, enduring gospel ministry.

Jeremy Pittsley

Text-Driven Preaching: God's Word at the Heart of Every Sermon, edited by Daniel L. Akin, David L. Allen, and Ned L. Matthews. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010, 304 pp. \$29.99.

"A text-driven sermon is a sermon that develops a text by explaining, illustrating, and applying its meaning. Text-driven preaching stays true to the substance of the text, the structure of the text, and the spirit of the text" (p. 8). By setting out a basic definition of text-driven preaching, David Allen sets the stage for the content of the book to follow. Within this volume authored by Southern Baptist pastors and professors are the principles and procedures for preaching a text-driven sermon. In a book made up of eleven chapters written by twelve authors (ch. 10 is co-authored) there will be a wide diversity in quality of material. In a review of this length, each chapter cannot be analyzed with sufficient depth to get a detailed appreciation for what is written. But, by addressing a few chapters one can get a representative look at the quality of the material.

If as preachers we truly believe that not only the content but even the form, structure, and application of our sermons must come from the text itself, then a volume that is devoted to preaching that is "text-driven" will be a welcome addition to any pastor's library. The book is divided into three main sections. First, "The Preacher and Text-Driven Preaching" addresses issues specifically targeted to the preacher himself. Paige Patterson's "Ancient Rhetoric: A Model for Text-Driven Preachers" is an interesting look at the history and contribution that the study of rhetoric makes to preachers. The basic qualities of *ethos*, *logos*, and *pathos* can be helpful lenses to approach preaching. While most of the chapter is helpful, Patterson's understanding of the preacher's walk with God is somewhat culturally biased and unhelpful. His requirement of formal dress to preach (jacket and tie) except in cross-cultural situations is rather anachronistic and frankly out of place in a section on the preacher's walk with God. Other chapters in this section include Jim Shaddix's "A History of Text-Driven Preaching," Bill Bennett's "The Secret of Preaching with Power," and Ned Matthews "The Disciplines of a Text-Driven Preacher." Each chapter makes a helpful contribution to the topic at hand, yet nothing revolutionary is being said here that has not been said before in other books.

Part two of the book, "Preparation and Text-Driven Preaching," gets to the heart of what many reading this book will be looking for. If one wants to preach a text-driven sermon, this section is where they will want to turn. David Allen writes on "Preparing a Text-Driven Sermon," David Alan Black on "Exegesis for the Text-Driven Sermon," Robert Vogel on "Biblical Genres and the Text-Driven Sermon," and finally Jim Hamilton on "Biblical Theology and Preaching." Hamilton's essay is perhaps one of the most interesting, necessary, and helpful chapters in the entire book. One of the biggest failures of many expository preachers is to constantly get mired down in the details of the text and fail to help people to see the big picture of what God is doing throughout Scripture.

Hamilton helps one see the necessity of putting the text into its canonical context and see how God is using that particular passage to teach about what he is doing in his grand design. How does one preach biblical theology? Hamilton says,

By explaining texts in canonical context. By highlighting the literary structures the authors have built into their texts, through which they make their points. By drawing attention to the reuse of words, phrases, and sequences from earlier biblical texts. By locating particular texts in the context of the Bible's big story. By showing how the biblical authors sought to encourage their audiences and connecting that encouragement to the members of their audience to whom we preach (p. 216).

My struggle, though, with Hamilton is his insistence that one know the original languages to faithfully preach the big picture of God. He writes, "One must be able to read the texts in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek if one wants to do biblical theology" (p. 213). The reality is, a thorough understanding of the original languages is crucial to exegeting the text of Scripture, but this does not mean that someone who does not read the original languages cannot bring the text into the big picture of what God is doing and do biblical theology. There are faithful pastors all around the world who do not know the original languages who faithfully do biblical theology each Lord's day.

Part three of the book, "Preaching the Text-Driven Sermon" offers some final tips on translating the sermon from the page to the ear. Hershauer York's "Communication Theory and Text-Driven Preaching" helpfully applies the results of research into communication for the sake of preaching. Adam Dooley and Jerry Vines have written a helpful chapter on "Delivering a Text-Driven Sermon." Finally, Danny Akin offers an insightful look at "Applying a Text-Driven Sermon." This overview should be read by every pastor seeking to faithfully apply the Scriptures to the lives of his people. The strongest contribution of this chapter is Akin's discussion about making very pointed, specific application. Such application should start in the head, move to the heart, and then tell the hands what to do. Too many preachers stop in the head or skip the head altogether and just begin in the hand. All three (head, heart, and hand) are necessary and Akin does an excellent job emphasizing this need.

Despite the fact that books authored by many people usually vary in quality, this book is a good look at how to preach the Word of God in a way that truly honors the text. Too many pastors fail to apply the principles explained in this book despite claiming to be expository preachers. We would be well-reminded of the truths outlined here as we work hard at faithfully presenting what God wants people to hear in and from his Word. Therefore, despite the weaknesses mentioned, this book has a number of strengths and should be studied by preachers hoping to be faithful.

Allen R. Mickle, Jr.

Baptists Through the Centuries: A History of a Global People, by David W. Bebbington. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010. xii + 315 pp. \$39.95.

David Bebbington has done it again! Widely known for his insightful quadrilateral of evangelicalism, he has now written an eminently useful overview of Baptist life. If one is looking for one book that will give a novice student a good summary of Baptist life or remind a seasoned Baptist scholar of our glorious history, this is the book to buy. Bebbington, the well-respected British Baptist historian, has done an admirable job of distilling the essence of four centuries of Baptist development along both chronological and thematic lines. He tells an engaging and balanced story of the Baptist theological pilgrimage. The book is not intended to be a detailed scholarly presentation of the fine nuances of Baptist growth. Rather, Bebbington presents an excellent panoramic view of the broad contours of Baptist history in a highly readable volume.

This panoramic view makes this work both unique and helpful. The strength of Bebbington's presentation is his ability to pick from the myriad of well-known Baptist figures a representative selection of the most important individuals while also highlighting some lesser-known but significant people. Their stories are merged into a large, colorful tapestry that presents Baptist life as one continuous evolving and growing movement. Bebbington does justice to the diversity and complexity that has characterized Baptists since their emergence from the English separatist movement in the early 1600s.

Bebbington does a nice job of connecting the early Baptists to English separatism. He recognizes that no single tributary can account entirely for the broad stream of Baptist identity, but comes out strongly against any direct connection between the early Baptists and the Anabaptists, seeing the latter's influence as minor at best. English separatism holds the key for understanding Baptist origins. From here Bebbington traces the Baptist story along the traditional lines of the General Baptists and the Particular Baptists of the seventeenth century. As the eighteenth century unfolds, Baptists, particularly in America, grew largely as a result of the revivals sweeping the Colonies. It was during this period that British Baptists divided over Socinianism at Salter's Hall. This event was the harbinger of further Baptist divergence into "fresh doctrinal paths," as the influence of Enlightenment rational principles grew (p. 68). Among these divergences were shifts in the understanding of various Baptists on ecclesiology (p. 187).

As Bebbington brings the Baptist story into the modern era, he discusses Baptist developments along important thematic lines. Theological polarization, the Social Gospel, race relations, and women in Baptist life all get major chapter treatments. As Bebbington moves toward the close of the book, he treats the important subject of religious liberty, a hallmark of Baptist character. The globalization of Baptist life, first through

the foreign mission movement and later thorough indigenous developments, is treated in summary fashion sketching a worldwide Baptist movement that is alive and well today. Finally, the subject of Baptist identity, perhaps the most contentious issue in recent Baptist thought, comes under Bebbington's scrutiny. Without catering to any particular agenda, Bebbington surveys the debate on Baptist identity from E. Y. Mullins to Bill Leonard. What makes one a Baptist—a theological core or a philosophical ideal like soul liberty? He ends the book by identifying seven "fairly distinct" Baptist groups—liberal, evangelical, premillennial, charismatic, Calvinist, Anabaptist, and High Church. One might quibble with some of these categories: for instance, the premillennial, charismatic, and Calvinist groups could all be subsumed under evangelical. Moreover, I am not sure that the category of charismatic Baptist merits a separate consideration. Many Baptists have flirted with the charismatic movement in recent history, but perhaps not in sufficient number to be considered a distinct strand, at least in its American permutations. Still, the categories are useful for noting the broad diversity in Baptist life, and Bebbington displays a refreshing evenhandedness toward all groups who affirm the Baptist label.

Weaknesses in the book are relatively minor. Bebbington, as a European Baptist, shows less familiarity with modern American Baptists, especially when he refers to the General Association of Regular Baptists as the "General Convention of Regular Baptists" (p. 267). The one thing the GARBC did not want to be was a convention. But this is relatively minor and may be overlooked. There is a heavy dependence on the secondary literature when telling certain parts of the story; in particular, his discussion of the Social Gospel and Walter Rauschenbusch relies substantially on Christopher Evans's recent biography of Rauschenbusch, *The Kingdom is Always but Coming* (Eerdmans, 2004). But again, Bebbington's primary contribution is not in the details of the Baptist story, but in the broad story that he tells, so that his occasional dependence on secondary literature is understandable.

On the whole, the book is a balanced, thoughtful presentation of Baptist life useful for student and academic alike in better understanding our glorious and sometimes spotted heritage.

Jeffrey P. Straub